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Letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Chargé d' affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations will convene an open debate in the Security Council under the French presidency, on 27 October at 10 a.m., on the theme "Women and peace and security".

This discussion will be an opportunity to take stock of 17 years of efforts to fully reflect women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in which they are not only victims but also indispensable actors. The Mission will also invite participants to highlight concrete actions and arrangements for strengthening the implementation and monitoring of these commitments.

The concept note for this event is attached to the present letter.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anne **Gueguen**
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Concept note for the Security Council open debate, to be held on 27 October 2017, on women and peace and security — realizing the promise of the women and peace and security agenda: ensuring its full implementation, including the participation of women

During its presidency of the Security Council, on 27 October, France will convene an open debate on women and peace and security. The debate will focus on the implementation of Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) and provide the Council, and the larger membership of the United Nations, with an opportunity to identify and more effectively target gaps and challenges.

Background

The women and peace and security agenda has gained significant normative strength since its inception in 2000. It is no longer considered solely a thematic issue, and is now acknowledged for its full capacity — as an essential pillar of global affairs integral to other thematic and country-specific issues considered by the Security Council and beyond. Regional and national policy support for the agenda has also continued to grow. Since 2015, a number of innovations have been operationalized, including, for example, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the Women and Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The Secretary-General has reiterated his strong and fundamental commitment to achieving global goals on gender equality and women's empowerment as prerequisites in the parallel prioritization of prevention.

The 2017 report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2017/861) details how the implementation of this agenda contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, enhances the effectiveness of interventions and facilitates sustained peace and the prevention of conflict. The report further details those efforts that are under way, as well as those that are needed to effect change across the full spectrum of the agenda. This includes efforts aimed at implementing the women and peace and security agenda in peace processes and in efforts to prevent the emergence and relapse of violent conflict; protecting and promoting the rights and leadership of women and girls in mission and humanitarian settings; preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism; and building inclusive and peaceful societies. It highlights steps taken by different actors to monitor and advance results and underscores civil society's role as a key partner across implementation efforts.

After 17 years of implementing the women and peace and security agenda, the global study on women and peace and security, and the 2015 high-level peace and security reviews, however, the agenda remains in need of greater commitments to ensure its full implementation. For instance, data for 2016 show that only half of peace agreements adopted contained gender-specific provisions, women's representation continued to lag behind global goals and benchmarks set, impunity for human rights violations persists at all levels, including conflict-related sexual violence, stigma and lack of access to essential services remain of grave concern,

and women continued to be sidelined in larger economic recovery efforts, including in the focus of economic recovery programmes on sectors where women are not represented or excluded, and as beneficiaries of predominantly small-scale, local-level initiatives. While the value of implementation tools such as national action plans is now recognized, several existing action plans will soon expire or lack the resources and means for effective implementation. Moreover, there are significant gaps in the availability of meaningful data to collect, measure and assess progress. More can and must be done to ensure that women and peace and security is mainstreamed across the work of the Council, including country-specific and thematic debates, as well as in the work of its subsidiary bodies.

Aims and objectives

It is therefore key for the Council and the whole membership to recall its commitments to address gender equality, women's empowerment and protection of women's rights and the risks faced by women, including all forms of sexual and gender violence. Conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict rebuilding and sustained peace can be fully achieved only if those intrinsic objectives are duly taken into consideration.

All Member States are responsible for implementing the women and peace and security agenda and ensuring women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution. Civil society, including women's organizations and women human rights defenders, has played a major role in this regard and its engagement as a key actor must be both recognized and facilitated, including at the local level, where it must be allowed to play a greater role.

Since 2000, eight resolutions on the women and peace and security agenda have been adopted by the Security Council. Yet the ambitious targets set in the various resolutions remain to be fully implemented.

The debate therefore aims to reinvigorate and significantly scale up action where needed with the intertwined objectives of:

(a) Urging greater commitment to implementing the women and peace and security agenda, notably through more systematic and concrete reporting on the results;

(b) Urging women's full and meaningful participation and leadership in all efforts to maintain peace and security, including efforts to prevent conflict, sustain peace and respond to new threats and challenges.

Towards implementation: more robust and regular reporting to the Council by Member States

In 2015, on the occasion of the high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000), Member States were invited to announce concrete commitments aimed at closing implementation gaps and accelerating progress, including by sharing good practices. Drawing from this exemplary exercise, at this year's open debate, Member States are invited to present concrete actions and results achieved on previous commitments, to describe the challenges they face with regard to the participation of women and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, to share innovative practices and announce new commitments. We recall that the overall objectives must be both quantitative and qualitative. The open debate could offer an annual opportunity to review and take stock of the results achieved and all Member States could adhere to the key principle of "no backsliding" in commitments made.

Urging increased participation of women at all stages

Women's meaningful participation across the full spectrum of conflict prevention and resolution is fundamental and absolutely necessary to efficiently end conflicts and durably bring peace. Women's participation notably strengthens efforts aimed at improving protective environments, accelerates economic recovery and deepens initiatives aimed at building and sustaining peace. The spectrum shall not leave aside peace and political processes, peacekeeping, elections, security sector reform and post-conflict solutions. Some slight progress has been witnessed when it comes to women's participation in peace processes but, as the Secretary-General's report highlights, inclusive processes must be the norm, not the exception. Structural and other barriers to women's meaningful participation and leadership in governance, the design, development and implementation of humanitarian assistance, economic recovery, efforts to prevent violent extremism, and more persist. Member States are therefore encouraged to again present results and plans to improve women's meaningful participation.

Presentation of results and efforts in this area should build upon previous commitments, noting progress and highlighting challenges, as well as focus on the impacts of women's meaningful participation. In particular, Member States are invited to highlight efforts and plans to ensure that such participation is meaningful and diverse, including from a diverse range of voices, as well as young women and civil society.

Indicative questions for the debate

Recognizing the need to move beyond ad hoc, small-scale and project-based approaches to implementation, participants are encouraged to deliver concise but strong and focused statements, highlighting actions that contribute to sustained and catalytic changes. Issues to consider include:

- How can the promises of the agenda's core pillars, including prevention and participation, be fulfilled?
- How could repeated calls for more national accountability for commitments be translated into more systematic, stronger reporting and monitoring by Member States? How can we better take stock of the progress achieved and record the lessons learned in this regard? How can we encourage Member States and international organizations to elaborate and implement more comprehensive action plans? What mechanisms currently exist for holding actors accountable for upholding obligations and delivering on commitments?
- What does strong leadership on the agenda look like at different levels — global, regional and subregional, national and local levels? What are the good examples and what plans could be further elaborated?
- How can good practices be translated into standard practices? What obstacles have been met during the course of implementation of the action plans?
- What could be done to enhance gender equality, promote women's rights and mainstreaming of gender into the whole cycle of prevention and response to conflict situations, including prevention and the post-conflict phase? How can gender and conflict analysis contribute to early warning and action in support of prevention? How can we better promote gender-responsive environments?
- What good examples can be brought to the fore? What measures proved efficient in the mainstreaming of gender and developing a more gender-sensitive approach?

- How can the fundamental human rights of women and girls be respected, protected and promoted during and after conflict, including during displacement, and the safety and security of those who defend them be guaranteed?
- How to ensure that the necessary capacities for implementation are guaranteed? What mechanisms, tools, benchmarks and actions could generate increased commitments by different actors?

Participation, briefers and outcome

Briefers:

- Secretariat: representative to be confirmed
- Phumzile **Mlambo-Ngcuka**, Executive Director of UN-Women
- Charo **Mina-Rojas**, representative of civil society, National Coordinator of Proceso de Comunidades Negras (on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security)
- Michaëlle **Jean**, Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie

We encourage all participants to deliver concise but strong and focused statements, lasting no longer than four minutes, so that everyone can underline the main concrete actions and plans implemented and the remaining challenges.

All participants are encouraged to report as precisely as possible on their concrete actions and measures.

No outcome is expected to be adopted by the Security Council.